



ANCESTRY

WHY ANCESTRY?

For the 2006 Census, the objective of the question on ancestry is to gain a better understanding of a person's ethnic background, particularly for Australians who have recently arrived. A person's ancestry, when used in conjunction with the person's birthplace, language and religion, and whether the person's parents were born in Australia or overseas, provides a good indication of the ethnic background of first and second generation Australians.

Ancestry data also helps to identify the distinct cultural groups within Australia, such as Maoris or Australian South Sea Islanders, and groups which are spread across countries, such as Kurds or Indians. Country of birth data alone cannot identify these groups. Identification of these groups is essential for planning and the effective delivery of services to particular ethnic communities.

ANCESTRY IN EARLIER CENSUSES

Ancestry was first included as a question in the 1986 Census. The aim of the question was to measure the ethnic composition of the population as a whole. Evaluation showed that it was not useful for this purpose as there was a high level of subjectivity and confusion about what the question meant, particularly for those people whose families had been in Australia for many generations. Very little use was made of the ancestry data from the 1986 Census. As a consequence, ancestry was not included in either the 1991 or 1996 Censuses.

However, leading up to the 2001 Census, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) established a Census Consultative Group on Ancestry, with the objectives of:

- seeking user input;

- identifying user requirements for these data;
- researching international practices; and
- developing and testing questions which would provide acceptable and accurate data at a reasonable cost.

The conclusion of the Consultative Group was that major policy issues required data about those people who were born overseas themselves, or whose parents were born overseas. It was considered that an ancestry question, in combination with a question on whether the person's parents were born in Australia or overseas, would produce the desired information.

ANCESTRY IN THE 2006 CENSUS

For the 2006 Census, respondents were asked to mark the ancestries they most closely identified with and to consider their ancestry back as far as two generations (ie. their parents and grandparents). Respondents were asked to report at least one ancestry, but no more than two ancestries (see Figure 1). The instructions differed from the 2001 Census where respondents were asked to 'Provide more than one ancestry if necessary', and to consider their parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

Because Ancestry is a multi-response question in the Census, responses were coded into two variables - ANCP1 (first response) and ANCP2 (second response). Depending on the number of responses given, some people are recorded with one ancestry while others have two. There is no ranking of responses, so if a respondent reports two ancestries, both answers have equal standing.

Figure 1. Ancestry question in the 2006 Census Household form

18 What is the person's ancestry?

- Provide up to two ancestries only.
- Examples of 'Other - please specify' are: GREEK, VIETNAMESE, HMONG, DUTCH, KURDISH, MAORI, LEBANESE, AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDER.
- See page 7 of the Census Guide for more information.
- Remember to mark boxes like this: ☐

☐ English
☐ Irish
☐ Italian
☐ German
☐ Chinese
☐ Scottish
☐ Australian

Other - please specify

OUTPUT TABLES

For output, the two ancestry variables (ANCP1 and ANCP2) have been combined into one variable - ANCP. It is important to note that in a table which shows a selection of ancestries, those people who reported two ancestries will be counted twice and the total for the table may be greater than the number of people in the selected geographic area. To assist users when analysing ancestry data in standard output, such as the Basic Community Profile, and Census Tables, tables display both total responses and total persons. Data in this form is useful for showing the total number of people who reported a specific ancestry e.g. Chinese.

It is still possible to derive ancestry data using the two individual response variables. For example, the number of persons who have both Australian and Vietnamese ancestry can be obtained by cross-tabulating these two ancestry variables.

THE ANCESTRY CLASSIFICATION

Ancestry is coded using the *Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups* (ASCCEG), Second Edition 2005-06 (cat. no. 1249.0).

It is based on:

- the geographic area in which a group originated or developed; and
- the similarity of cultural and ethnic groups in terms of social and cultural characteristics.

The ABS developed this classification to satisfy wide community interest in the ethnic and cultural composition of the Australian population and the characteristics of particular migrant community groups. The classification is intended to provide a standard to meet a growing statistical, administrative and service delivery need for data relating to these interests.

The ASCCEG classification for ethnicity is based on the self-perceived group identification approach, which uses a self-assessed response to a direct question. This approach measures the extent to which individuals associate with particular cultural or ethnic groups.

There have been some changes in the classification for Ancestry since the 2001 Census.

- Three ancestries have been moved to other categories.
- Forty-eight ancestries have been added to the classification.
- Six ancestries have been removed from the classification.

Further information on this subject is available in the *Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups* (ASCCEG), Second Edition 2005-06 (cat. no. 1249.0).

2006 SCOTTISH DATA

There was a significant increase (almost triple) in the number of responses for Scottish ancestry in the 2006 Census compared to the 2001 Census (see Table 1 below). One reason for this is the change in form design between the two censuses. Scottish was included as a tick-mark response in the 2006 Census but not in the 2001 Census. It is known that specific mention of an ancestry on the Census form leads to a greater likelihood of people selecting that ancestry. Removal of the Greek tick-mark response for the 2006 Census which was included in the 2001 Census, has resulted in a decrease in the number of responses. However, between the two censuses, the decrease in Greek is not as significant as the increase in Scottish .

RELATED VARIABLES

The measurement of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Australian population, and the degree to which Australians retain their ethnic and cultural identity, is primarily based on the use of a number of Census variables related to a person's origin, including: Ancestry (ANCP1/ANCP2), Country of Birth of Person (BPLP), Country of Birth of Mother (BPFP), Country of Birth of Father (BPMP), Religious Affiliation (RELP), Year of Arrival in Australia (YARP), Indigenous Status (INGP) and language variables such as Language Spoken at Home (LANP) and Proficiency in Spoken English (ENGP).

Table 1. Top Ten Ancestry responses for the 2006 and 2001 Censuses

Ancestry	2006	2001
Australian	7 371 823	6 739 594
English	6 283 647	6 358 880
Irish	1 803 736	1 919 727
<i>Scottish</i>	<i>1 501 200</i>	<i>540 046</i>
Italian	852 421	800 256
German	811 543	742 212
Chinese	669 901	556 554
Greek	365 150	375 703
Dutch	310 082	268 754
Indian	234 720	156 581